



Missouri Sector Strategies and Workforce Development Planning Project:

Final Report



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Missouri Department of
Economic Development.
Division of Workforce
Development

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I. Introduction

The passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) has been a catalyst for innovation as states and regions move to implement the Act's changes to the its workforce development systems. The State of Missouri sought to ensure, through this project, that its system's transformation included an emphasis on industry sector strategies and regional workforce planning, leading to an employer-driven approach that would better meet the needs of employers and job seekers alike.

Sector strategies — regional, industry-focused approaches to building skilled workforces — have proven to be one of the most effective ways to align public institutions and agencies with industry to address the talent needs of employers and provide better career opportunities for workers. However, sector strategies are not “another program.” Done well, they are truly transformative. When fully implemented, sector strategies become the strategic lens through which regional talent development is carried out and the operational framework for workforce development services.

When paired with integrated career pathways tied to targeted sectors, as Missouri is clearly seeking, sector strategies create skilled pipelines of talent for employers and offer enhanced career development avenues for workers.

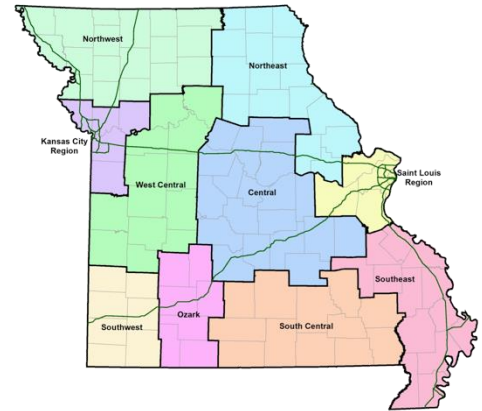
The challenge of building support for sector-based service delivery throughout the state should not be underestimated, however. It is important to develop a culture that embraces sectors and that helps all partners and levels of the workforce system see their role and positively engage with the change from a largely transactional and labor exchange-focused approach to workforce development. The focus of this project was to “move the needle” in each region as it relates to sector strategies.

The Missouri Division of Workforce Development (DWD) engaged Maher & Maher in August 2015 to facilitate interdisciplinary public/private regional teams through a process that planned for, built, and began to implement a sector strategy framework in each of the state's ten

Project Vision

Missouri will have a talent development system that supports strong regional economies by aligning the resources of all partners, public and private, toward developing a talent pipeline that creates meaningful career pathways for a range of workers and skill levels in important regional industries.

regions. In its 30th year of operation, Maher & Maher is a specialized change management and talent development consulting firm that delivers tailored solutions to public sector organizations and commercial clientele. Maher is based in New Jersey and also has offices in Washington, DC. Our team has provided subject matter expertise and facilitation of teams from Missouri's ten regions through the process described here.



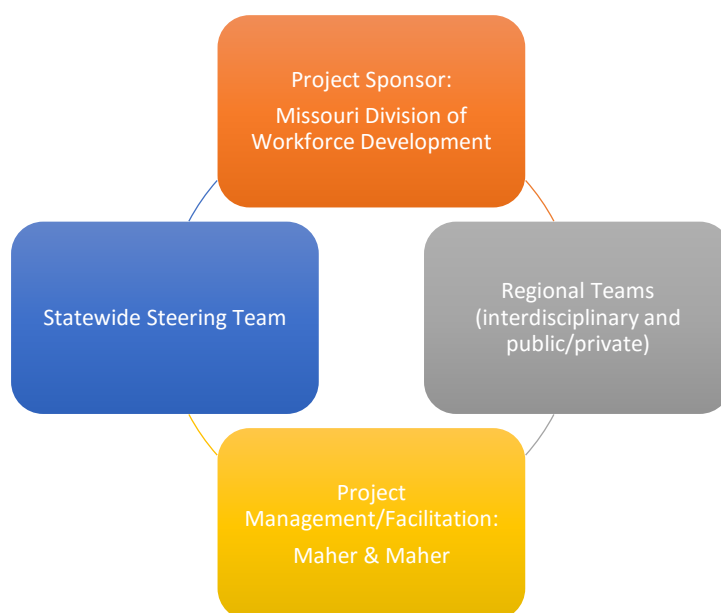
This report serves as the final deliverable of this project and aims to:

- Document the scope, process, and activities of the project;
- Summarize the work completed in each region;
- Make recommendations for moving sectors partnerships and career pathways forward; and
- Identify challenges and opportunities identified during the course of the project.

II. Project Overview

Maier & Maier was engaged to facilitate interdisciplinary public/private regional teams through a process that would help team members understand, prepare for, and begin to implement sector strategies. Regions were in various places on the continuum of sector strategies – ranging for no existing sectors work to at least one region with a very developed sector strategies framework.

The Missouri Division of Workforce Development was the project sponsor and, along with the Workforce Investment Board of Southeast Missouri and the project Steering Team, provided operational and strategic direction to the Maier project team.



While the bulk of the project involved work with the ten regional planning teams, several activities were completed at the state level. State-level activities included:

a. Creation of state-level Steering Team

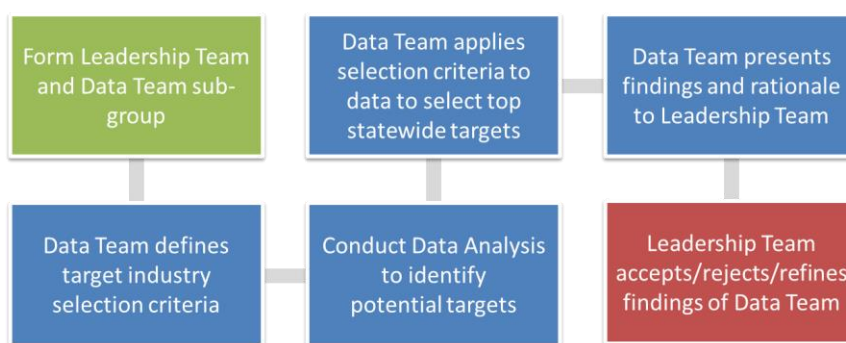
- At the outset of the project, DWD formed a Steering Team comprised of key executives and staff of the agencies involved in Missouri's talent development system; other public stakeholder representatives from the state, regional, and local levels; and private sector representatives. The Steering Team's role was to provide leadership and to ensure that recommendations accepted by the Steering Team at the conclusion of this project are implemented. The Steering Team convened on September 29, 2015 in Jefferson City for a sector strategies overview and discussion of project goals and activities. The Steering Team also reviewed and adopted a project charter, which outlined the vision and mission of the project; the roles and responsibilities of the Steering Team, Regional Teams, and Maier Team; and the deliverables and timeline of the project.

- The Steering Team met again virtually on October 20, 2015 with Maher and members of the Data Team (described below) to review the state-level target industry analysis completed by the Data Team and approve their recommended target industries.
- The Maher team provided project updates to the Steering Team by email several times and three presentations on the project were given to the Missouri Workforce Development Board during the course of the project.
- The Steering Team will meet one more time, on July 26, 2016, to review, refine, and adopt the final recommendations of this project.

b. Creation of state-level Data Team

Because completing a data analysis of target industry clusters for the state and each region was a foundational step in this project, and in sector strategy development more broadly, a state-level Data Team was created. The Data Team's role was to ensure that all partners' data efforts are fully leveraged and that the entire project team was operating from the same information. The Data Team, generally comprised of representatives from all statewide partners that maintain economic, workforce, education, and other data critical to the design and implementation of industry sector and career pathway strategies, included the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC), the Missouri Partnership, the Missouri Department of Higher Education, State Fair Community College, St. Louis Community College and a local workforce area.

Target Industry Selection:
Consensus-Based Decision Making Model TM



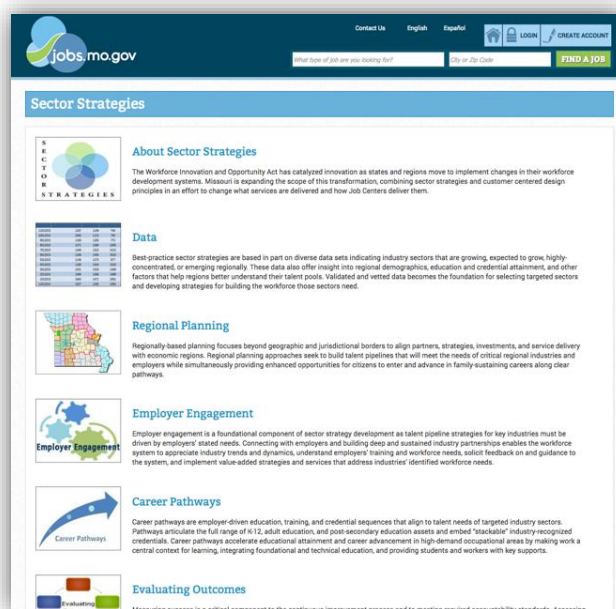
Using our Consensus-Based Decision Making Model, pictured here, the Data Team analyzed industry cluster data provided by Scott Sheely, a member of the Maher project team, and recommended statewide target sectors, which were presented to and approved by the Steering Team on October 20, 2015. They included Diversified Manufacturing (Metal, Food, Lumber and Paper, Chemicals); Health Care; Financial and Professional Services; Information Technology; Transportation and Logistics; Energy Solutions; and Biosciences. Key criteria that supported the selection of these sectors included competitive advantage as

measured by location quotient, growth as measured by projected increases or decreases in employment, size of the cluster, and additional inputs including previous reports and other policy considerations.

c. Sector strategies toolkit content for website

The DWD team created a sector strategies section on the jobs.mo.gov website and our team has been populating it with project resources and best practices related to topics such as sector strategies, career pathways, regional planning, and business engagement.

The vast majority of work in this project was focused at the regional level. Regionally-focused activities included:



a. Creation of Regional Planning Teams

Maher facilitators worked with local workforce area directors (the points of contact for each regional planning team) to form and prepare ten regional teams for the October 28-29, 2015 Statewide Launch Meeting. Facilitators provided recommendations for membership on the regional planning teams, facilitated team calls, and coordinated the distribution and completion of a self-assessment exercise in advance of the Statewide Launch to objectively assess regions' readiness to plan and implement sector strategies.

b. Statewide Launch Meeting at the Lake of the Ozarks

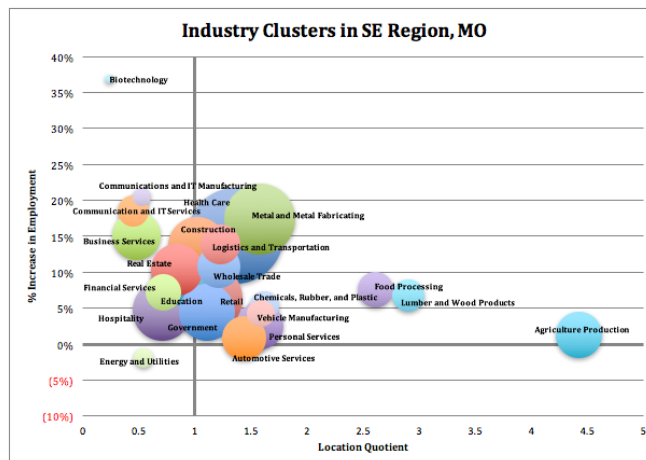
The Maher team, in collaboration with DWD, planned and facilitated the Statewide Launch Meeting at the Lake of the Ozarks in October 2015. The objectives of this meeting were to:

- Give regional partners a facilitated, dedicated space to come together to advance their sector-based planning activities;
- Review regional data analysis and make initial decisions on regional target industry clusters;

- Prioritize sector-based opportunities, needs, and action items, based upon regional SWOT analyses and regional team self-assessment activities; and
- Begin to craft regional team action plans and position regional teams for ongoing collaborative planning work.

c. Regional Industry Cluster Data Analysis and Final Report

The Maher team developed comprehensive regional industry cluster data packages and final reports for each of the 10 regional teams. The analysis included data for 23 clusters by region and looked at data points including location quotient, current jobs and establishments, projected job growth, earnings, largest industries, highest paying industries, fastest growing industries, and top 100 occupations.



The Maher team also provided additional target cluster staffing pattern data to each regional team and provided teams with technical assistance on using staffing patterns and integrating them with the career pathways information provided in October 2015. We hosted a webinar on using staffing pattern data to support career pathways identification and development for regional teams on December 17, 2015.

d. Regional Launch Meetings

Maher facilitators supported regions in their planning work over the course of the project in a variety of ways, which are described in the next section of the report. Our team also facilitated and/or otherwise supported a number of Industry Launch Meetings. Launch meetings were designed to formalize regions' work with target industry clusters, solicit input from industry cluster representatives, and use that input to develop responsive strategies for action. Some regions chose to hold team meetings or other sessions during the project, with plans to host Industry Launch Meetings in the future. The following table lists the target industry cluster selected by each region to work on as well as their Launch (or other) meeting dates.

Region	Primary Target Industry Cluster(s)	Launch Meeting Date
West Central	Diversified Manufacturing	April 12
Southeast	Diversified Manufacturing	April 26 (Perryville) and 27 (Sikeston)
South Central	Diversified Manufacturing	None
Northwest	Manufacturing	June 22 (team meeting)
Northeast	Manufacturing/Metal and Metal Fabrication/Welding	June 23-24 (team meetings)
Central	Advanced Industries	June 29
St. Louis	Diversified Manufacturing (aligning with St. Louis Partnership project)	TBD (likely late summer 2016)
Kansas City	IT, Logistics, Healthcare/Bioscience, Financial Services, Advanced Manufacturing, and Construction	Kansas City hosted 13 industry listening sessions across the region
Southwest	Manufacturing (current focus), Healthcare, Professional Services, Information Technology, Construction, and Transportation	None
Ozark	Healthcare	TBD

e. Career Pathways Webinar

On June 2, 2016, the Maher team delivered a webinar on how to use data and employer input to understand and map career pathways in regional target sectors and work with education, training, and other partners to align programming and services to pathways.

III. Overview of Work in Each Region

Each region was assigned a Maher facilitator who provided support to the regional planning team point of contact and other team members on sector strategy-related activities. Due the diverse circumstances in each region, either related to the region's pre-project work/experience with sector strategies or other factors, facilitators provided a wide range of assistance and resources. Project work was customized to the greatest extent possible while still maintaining the integrity of the scope of work.

This section of the report includes a description of the work done in each region:

- Team/Planning Development Process: Team formation; regional planning process and progress.
- Target Industries: Initial focus sector, and additional sectors for later focus; how sectors were chosen.
- Key Goals: Priority goals now and moving forward, and how they connect to the region's recognized challenges and opportunities.
- Deliverables: Products created for region and major activities pursued with the region.
- Recommendations: Facilitator recommendations for the regional team's next steps and continued progress.

A. Northwest Region Summary Report

Team/Planning Development Process

Prior to the statewide launch of the sector strategies work, many of the Northwest Regional Team members were active in the Community Foundation of Northwest Missouri's work on regional vitality. Through that initiative, they were already working together in the areas of quality of life, education, workforce development, economic development, business development, and business startup and entrepreneurship development, all key dimensions of regional economic competitiveness. That work was scheduled to continue on, so there was interest in aligning the regional vitality work with the emerging regional sector work.

Public sector partners on the Team include workforce development, vocational rehabilitation, adult education and literacy, the Family Support Division, economic development, post-secondary education, and Community Foundation board members. Team members were very engaged in sharing their insights on the region's economic challenges and how sector work could benefit all of the partners and the region more broadly.

During the Statewide Launch meeting, the Team reviewed customized and in-depth labor market information as well as economic development information about their region from the recent report completed by the Community Foundation of Northwest Missouri and state-supplied LMI. The team found the target industry cluster data provided by Maher & Maher to be very comprehensive, though they needed more time following the Statewide Launch to review and discuss it.

During the Statewide Launch meeting, the Team completed a SWOT analysis to identify their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The SWOT analysis reflected their strongest industries as manufacturing and agriculture and identified the importance of training to keep higher-paying jobs in the area and to reduce "brain drain." The Team also completed a self-assessment and identified their strongest area as being drivers of strategic partner alignment and their biggest challenge as ensuring measured, improved, and sustained industry sector strategies.

Target Industries

The Team relied on studies completed by the Northwest Community Foundation and the Region's TAACCCT grant applications in health care and manufacturing as sources for identifying the leading industry clusters in the Northwest region. The Team decided to focus on health care, agriculture production, food processing, metals and metal fabricating (manufacturing), and biotechnology. The manufacturing industry was identified as the Team's primary focus for initial sector work since the Region has already started working in that area through the manufacturing TAACCCT. Construction trades were also discussed and listed as a potential additional focus area in the future. During the Statewide Launch meeting, Northwest Team members were very eager to understand and analyze the industry cluster and LMI material provided and noted that they would need additional data analysis and staff assistance moving forward in order to make the most of the information.

Key Goals

The Northwest Regional Team's discussion was focused on developing clear goals for sector strategies work that would align with and enhance the priorities of business in key regional industries and of regional partner organizations and that would further sector work already underway in the region.

In its summary of the October 2015 Launch meeting, The Northwest Team articulated a guiding vision and overarching goal for its sector work: *Northwest regional partners will work together to identify industry needs for workers with specific skills, education, and credentials and to ensure that educational and training opportunities are aligned to those needs and available to job seekers.*

The Northwest Workforce Development Board agreed to act as the convener of the regional team, bringing together regional stakeholders, facilitating dialogue with industry leaders to articulate their workforce needs, and building on the sector momentum underway through the region's TAACCCT manufacturing grant. They agreed that they would develop a draft action plan outlining key goals for the Team's review and they completed that draft plan in January 2016. Since that time, they have focused on engaging in technical assistance activities to support them in the finalization of their action plan over the next year.

Deliverables Created for Region

The team's facilitator developed or shared the following items with the team:

1. Initial and additional data on the region's clusters, staffing pattern data, interstate labor market commuting pattern data, and occupational data
2. Samples of employer surveys used in other Missouri regions
3. Information on competency-based training models and engaging employers in sector work, following a literature review

In addition, these template/examples were shared with the Northwest regional team over the course of the project:

1. Project plan template to guide the team's and facilitator's work during the project;
2. Team meeting agendas and notes;
3. Updated regional plan framework to reflect team discussions following the October 2015 statewide launch meeting;
4. Asset-mapping template; and
5. Materials and other deliverables related to industry launch meetings, such as invitation language, a sample agenda, a sample participant handout, and other materials.

Finally, the Maher & Maher facilitator conducted an in-person visit with the team on June 22, 2016, which was a key project activity. The Team had planned to host a regional industry launch in June 2016, but postponed those plans in order to complete the WIOA regional planning process. The Team plans to hold a launch for the next iteration of its manufacturing sector work at the Workforce Development Board retreat in September 2016. The June meeting with the facilitator focused on preparing for the September meeting and reviewing various materials provided throughout this project. The Northwest Team is especially interested in the Southeast Missouri region's industry launch approach (the Southeast Team held its two launch meetings in April 2016), and would like to engage both June O'Dell from the Southeast region and Jasen Jones from the Southwest region to serve as speakers at the September Board Retreat. During the June meeting with the facilitator, the Team also reviewed sample employer surveys provided and had a productive discussion around their sources of real-time, employer-based information.

Recommendations

1. The Northwest Team has many sources for real-time, employer-based data on manufacturers but the data has not been organized, synthesized, and summarized. The Team should review the data they currently have and summarize what is known and what is still in question about the training needs of manufacturers for review and discussion with the employer community.

For example, the Northwest region recently completed a two-year TAACCCT project that was focused on manufacturing. In the TAACCCT work, a group of regional manufacturing businesses was very active in the Advisory Board and in prioritizing the work of the TAACCCT grant. In addition, the Northwest region recently completed an application for a Tech Hire grant focused on manufacturing and during that process, employers were interviewed about their priorities for next steps for workforce development. The Northwest region also recently completed a TAACCCT grant proposal for STEM occupations that proposes surveying employers, including manufacturers. All of these inputs, combined with recent data-driven WIOA regional planning activities and the data the Team received during this project, will be useful in the creation of a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the needs of employers in the manufacturing sector.

2. A key focus of the manufacturing launch meeting at the September 2016 Workforce Development Board retreat should be reviewing, validating, and refining the themes and recommendations discussed in this summary report.

The Northwest Workforce Development Board is the logical organization to convene the regional Team's discussion of their next steps in furthering their sector work. The working relationships among Board staff, economic development, and community colleges are excellent and Board staff have the convening and facilitation and convening skills to move the sector work forward successfully. A key focus of the September meeting should be reviewing, validating, and refining the themes and recommendations contained in this report with private and public sector partners.

3. After the September Board retreat, the Team should update its January 2016 action plan to ensure it reflects any new information and current priorities.

The current action plan is a comprehensive work plan to move forward on sector work through the spring of 2017. The activities and timeline sections have been evolving and will benefit from a revision to reflect ongoing regional discussions, new data, and current strategic priorities.

4. The Northwest Team should continue to work closely with other Missouri sector strategies teams in neighboring regions, particularly Northeast Missouri.

Northwest's Team is eager to learn from its peers and to continue its excellent working relationship with MERIC staff, who provided valuable assistance. The Team has worked especially closely with Northeast Missouri as their two regions are similar and comprise the northern one-third of the state. The Team should also continue to work with peers in other states when labor shed issues are shared across state lines, as they are among the Northwest region, Iowa, and Kansas.

B. Kansas City Region Summary Report

Team/Planning Development Process

The Kansas City region is made up of two local workforce boards: Kansas City & Vicinity (KCV) WIB (Kansas City, Missouri, and Cass, Clay, Platte, and Ray Counties in Missouri) and Eastern Jackson County (EJC) WIB (Independence, Missouri and areas in Jackson County outside of Kansas City). The Kansas City Regional Team came together at the Statewide Launch meeting on October 28-29, 2015 as a consortium of partners representing the two local workforce boards, community colleges, adult education, and vocational rehabilitation.

The two LWIBs share a director, Clyde McQueen, who is the President and CEO of the Full Employment Council, Inc., the fiscal agent and one-stop operator for both LWIBs. The region, through the leadership of the Full Employment Council, was engaged in several sectors strategy activities prior to this project including the HPOG (Health Profession Opportunity Grants) Healthcare Apprenticeship Program, which provides on-the-job training for nursing assistants.

Prior to attending the Statewide Launch meeting, the members of the Regional Team completed self-assessments which were then reviewed and discussed at the in-person meeting. The debrief discussion on the self-assessment and asset mapping process was one of the most beneficial portions of the group's efforts at the statewide meeting. Each team member shared information about regional sector activities and programs, which later allowed for a thorough discussion of their regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

At the October meeting, the Regional Team also reviewed the Maher regional data report and, after robust discussion regarding the concentration and competitiveness of various industries in the region as well as career pathway opportunities in those industries, the Team decided to focus on the Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics industry as their initial target industry cluster. The Team developed action steps to move work in this target cluster forward. However, in early 2016, the workforce boards decided to build upon the sector initiatives started before this project and focus on five industry sectors: Advanced Manufacturing, Distribution & Logistics, IT, Finance, and Healthcare.

Target Industries

The team initially determined at the statewide meeting that Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics was their primary targeted industry based on the following factors:

- High competitive advantage, high demand occupations, and wages.
- The job growth data and skillsets needed were prevalent across the region and would provide targeted populations, such as formerly incarcerated individuals, access to these career pathways without some of the additional barriers they face in other sectors such as financial services.
- This industry cluster would be the first time the region looked to build this sector to scale across partners, and therefore would provide new opportunities to customers and partners. This initiative would allow other partners not previously involved in the sector initiatives to develop their skillsets and capacities in building regional partnerships to scale. This approach would also increase the level of buy-in among partners in forming truly collaborative approaches.

In early 2016, however, the Kansas City Region decided to focus on five industry sectors simultaneously:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Distribution and Logistics
- IT
- Finance
- Healthcare

Beginning in the spring of 2016, the Full Employment Council (FEC) awarded planning grants to economic development and sector-related organizations to host 8 business convenings with employers in the region's target sectors. The convening sessions were attended by approximately 130 employers who represented at least 40,000 jobs in the greater region. The purpose of these convenings were to determine the workforce needs of employers at the entry level, intermediate level, and advanced position.

A partner meeting is planned for late August/early September to synthesize results of the convenings. The series of meetings will culminate with a final, combined-sector meeting where the partners will present their draft strategies to the employers who participated in earlier listening sessions. Employers will be asked to give review and refine the strategies developed by the partners.

Key Goals

The goals developed by the Kansas City Regional Planning Team are to:

1. Hold a collaborative planning meeting across partners to de-brief the information heard in the thirteen industry listening sessions. The focus of this meeting will be on collectively and collaboratively addressing the top industry needs. This will also include a discussion of how the region can capitalize on the opportunities the Regional Team identified at the statewide meeting to prevent duplication and streamline services to employers.
2. Develop a unified business service team across partners within the region. This goal will capitalize on the strengths of business engagement and retention of employers across existing industry partnerships. Unified business services will reduce the duplication of services, streamline efforts across partners, and better utilize existing funding and resources to maximum capacity and outreach.
3. Build work-based learning opportunities across partners and programs for all customers. Focusing on this goal will help the region embed work-based learning into “traditional” classroom secondary and post-secondary education. Work-based learning opportunities also help engage students across generations and teach them both soft and technical skills.
4. Form soft skills workgroups across partners to collectively embed soft skills into training and service curriculums. Addressing soft skills was a priority area of concern of industry representatives in all five sectors. Establishing a workgroup will enable all partners in the region to develop shared strategies for uniformly addressing this key area.

Deliverables Created for the Region

1. Industry launch meeting toolkits: The Maher coach shared toolkits that provided background and resources from other local areas around the nation outlining their successful launches of industry engagement activities. Also included were draft agendas, invitations to community partners and employers, outlines of possible meeting flow, and facilitation techniques for the meeting.

2. Examples of best practices: Maher & Maher provided an extensive report developed previously for Kentucky by the firm on Unified Business Service teams, their formation, policies, and processes. Additional peer-learning opportunities were shared with the region through their coach for opportunities to participate in interactive webinars, conference calls, and US DOL's Employment and Training Administration's Sectors Virtual Institute where other regions with similar demographics and workforce challenges were discussed.
3. Attended industry listening session: The Maher & Maher coach attended the April 13 industry launch meeting in Kansas City, which focused on the IT, Manufacturing, and Distribution sectors.
4. Provided support for upcoming partner meeting: The coach offered to develop the agenda for the upcoming partners' planning meeting and also offered to attend and facilitate the meeting if it occurred prior the planned completion date for on-site work in the regions.

Recommendations

1. Regional team members need a shared sense of ownership: The Kansas City Region has previously developed sector strategies initiatives out of the work overseen by the local workforce boards. These sectors initiatives are a strength to the area as much of the vision for the region and industry engagement kick-off activities are already in place. However, in order to address the challenges outlined by the Regional Planning team, which included reducing duplication and developing collaborative approaches, it is important for all team members to buy-in and have equal representation as decisions are made. Keeping all members of the team fully informed and involved in the region's action plan is imperative so partners are knowledgeable about current and future priorities and progress. The regional planning team noted this as a key threat during their initial planning at the statewide meeting, and it is critical to capitalize on this opportunity to build a truly collaborative, aligned, and sustainable system.
2. Formalize a team structure to address goals and action steps as they relate to industry-prioritized needs: Because of the important information provided by employers on their challenges and needs, the region will no doubt have many strategic areas it will want to move forward with. One opportunity is to engage all partners in strategy development and implementation efforts through a workgroup structure. Developing workgroups

representative of partners will assist the region in expanding regional sector strategies beyond the individual efforts of the workforce boards and community colleges to truly create a system with both resources and staff capable of regionally meeting industry-prioritized needs. Such workgroups may be centered on focus areas, with examples including soft-skills, incorporating additional vocational training at the secondary level, preparing the emerging workforce with skills needed by regional employers in prioritized sectors, or developing internships and summer jobs. The planning matrix previously provided by Maher & Maher can serve as a support to capture the goals, strategies, and action steps as workgroups move forward.

3. Sector strategies and career pathways ultimately need to be operationalized at the service delivery level across partners: As regional partners move forward it is important that each partner examine their current staffing, policies and service delivery practices to ensure they are aligned with the workforce needs of targeted sectors. Regionally, each partner should ensure their individual organization's goals and objectives aide in putting into practice services that assist in creating, identifying, and expanding career pathways for jobseekers. In addition, the region should continue to convene partners to discuss the progress of implementing and aligning service delivery around key identified sectors to find opportunities to reduce duplication and ensure the individual efforts of organizations are collectively working together across the region to meet the unified goals. Collectively examining the service delivery structures will assist in identifying opportunities to leverage resources and efforts in areas such as building the training capacity of the region across partners so all staff have the tools and knowledge to be successful.
4. Align and integrate business services: In order to develop a system where regional employers' workforce and education needs truly drive goals and strategies, business services should be (a) regional and (b) coordinated/integrated among all partners (workforce development, community colleges, and economic development agencies, at a minimum). Currently a few partners (local workforce boards and community colleges) within the region are working together towards a unified business services approach, however, as the region seeks to continue to serve as a national leader in regionalism and sectors strategies it is vital they continue to expand these efforts to other workforce partners such as vocational rehabilitation and adult education. Including these core Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners will further enhance each organizations ability to effectively implement the new mandates and objectives of WIOA, which collectively will build a talent pipeline system employers rely on to fill their

workforce needs as regional economic growth is strengthened. Developing a system of unified partners providing services to businesses will aid the region in increasing their ability to customize solutions to employers and reduce duplicative efforts across all regional partners.

C. West Central Region Summary Report

Team/Planning Development Process

The West Central Regional team came together as a consortium of partners representing business, the local workforce development board, higher education, adult education, K-12, and other community partners at the statewide launch meeting in October 2015. The group was galvanized by the leadership of business members of the board, who offered an in-depth understanding of the labor market information and industry needs within the region. The team consisted of diverse partners from across the community who each were willing to have honest conversations about the status of sector partnerships and career pathways within their region and the work needed across their community to continue to build the talent pipeline.

Because of the spirit of cooperation among team members, the team accomplished quite a lot at the October meeting, including draft goals and strategies for all six of the sector strategies planning categories outlined in the regional planning matrix. The regional team identified several key next steps their regional team would take to further align information and partners' efforts.

Following the statewide meeting, the regional team reconvened on several occasions to continue action planning for a regional industry launch meeting and to further develop its regional planning matrix. One of these sessions was attended virtually by the team's Maher & Maher facilitator, who met several times with the workforce board director and deputy director in technical assistance sessions prior to regional team meetings.

On April 12, 2016, the West Central region successfully held a Diversified Manufacturing industry launch meeting with approximately 20 employers and 23 representatives of community partners present. Maher & Maher facilitated this meeting, leading both the employer listening sessions and the partner planning session which immediately followed. The regional team heard the common needs and pain points of manufacturers across the region. The manufacturers prioritized their areas of need for the region to address first: (1) addressing soft and essential skills; (2) recruiting additional skilled workers to the region, especially in professional fields; and (3) marketing manufacturing as a solid career choice to the emerging workforce and parents of these workers. The regional team is currently developing a workgroup structure to identify the key players needed to contribute to finding solutions to

these needs, identifying best practices others have used to address these areas, and re-engaging business and industry in this process.

Target Industries

The regional team, with the help of its industry champions, dove into the data to determine targeted industries with the highest competitive advantage, high-demand occupations, and family-sustaining wages. The group noticed opportunities across industry clusters such as agriculture production, food processing, and manufacturing that had a high competitive advantage. Likewise, these clusters share transferable occupations, such as maintenance and repair workers. The group also identified that they have two manufacturers on their workforce board who are willing to be industry champions and can recruit other manufacturers to the partnership. As a result, the regional team chose to combine elements of several clusters to create the Diversified Manufacturing cluster as their targeted industry to build out this first regional effort.

The team did consider other targeted industries, such as Healthcare, but decided that Diversified Manufacturing was their best choice at present due to the engagement of industry leaders at the statewide meeting. In the future, once the team implements a to-scale talent pipeline development strategy for Diversified Manufacturing, it will build out additional sector strategies and career pathways in other industries where the region has a competitive advantage.

Key Goals

The goals of the West Central region are to:

1. Develop an effective, diverse and sustainable regional team to meet the demands of the growth industries in the region. The team recognized that prior to the statewide meeting, their region did not have a shared regional vision or identity, and there was not a cohesive region-wide effort to build the talent pipeline for critical industries. In order to build a system that is sustainable after the life of the state-funded project, team members must develop strategies for shared messaging and communications and systems alignment now.
2. Develop a deeper collaborative partnership and create a regional identity that both job seekers and employers identify as the “go to” system for employment and training support. The group recognized that multiple agencies providing training, business services, and other talent development services all market independently and fail to

offer job seekers and employers a clear message about what is available across the workforce system as a whole. The regional team plans to better coordinate business services and align training and other services to position themselves as the “go to” system for employers. This will include unified marketing across the region and a “30-second elevator speech” that all partners use to describe the regional vision and their services.

3. Develop a data team to build understanding of competitive advantages and opportunities and also ensure that regional team partners are aligning their targets and strategies by sharing common definitions and data sources.
4. Share information about the job seeker assessments currently being used by partners and employers, including the advantages of each type of assessment and the extent to which assessments currently in use are meeting industry needs. During the industry launch meeting, this was an important topic of discussion among employers. Employers noted that the regional partners need to improve their promotion of the National Career Readiness Certificate program in particular.
5. Develop and maintain three workgroups that will address the top three priority areas as outlined by industry leaders at the regional industry launch meeting: (1) Addressing soft and essential skills; (2) Recruiting additional skilled workers to the region, especially for professional fields; and (3) Marketing manufacturing as a solid career option to both the emerging workforce and parents of those workers. The prioritization by industry leaders of these three areas aligns with opportunities and weaknesses the regional team had previously identified during their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis. A few pockets of successful programs with individual manufacturers in areas of the region were identified for replication at greater scale region-wide.

Deliverables Created for the Region

1. Self-assessment, asset mapping, and regional planning matrix: Prior to the statewide meeting, the regional planning team was provided with a self-assessment instrument that allowed each team member to communicate his/her viewpoint on their progress on implementing sector strategies regionally. Self-assessment responses were used as a basis for initial discussion at the statewide meeting, allowing allowed team members to identify areas of strength and opportunity. Team members later completed an asset-mapping template across partners to catalogue relevant resources, programs, and initiatives. Both of these exercises provided foundational inputs to the goals, strategies, and action step’s outlines in the team’s regional planning matrix.
2. One-on-one coaching: Much of the technical assistance provided to this region by Maher & Maher has been in the form of individual one-on-one coaching with the

workforce board director and deputy. Phone calls to review the agendas for the regional planning sessions, providing recommendations on the approach of the regional team, and answering questions directly from the industry representatives on the team were common activities. Coaching also included providing resources and best practices from other areas, helping with customization of the region's approach, and offering guidance on facilitation strategies for the industry launch meeting.

3. Sample sector strategy toolkit and industry launch meeting materials: The Maher facilitator provided the team with a sector strategies toolkit from another state that outlines models for industry engagement and industry launch meetings. The facilitator also shared draft meeting agendas, invitations to community partners and employers, sample questions for industry representatives, a one-pager outlining the regional vision and objectives of the sector initiative, and suggested facilitation methods to meet meeting objectives.
4. Examples of best practices from other areas of the country: In addition to the toolkit provided for the meeting, the Maher facilitator provided links to resources and best practices to the Wichita Workforce Board, which has worked with economic development and downtown developers to create an identity for the South Central Kansas Workforce Region.
5. Peer mentoring with other local workforce board: The Maher facilitator connected the West Central regional planning team to the Northwest Tennessee Workforce Board, which represents a region similar in geography, industries, and demographics. Several of the strategies Northwest Tennessee peers provided are methods that can address West Central's industry-recognized priority areas of marketing manufacturing to the emerging workforce and their parents and recruiting workers to the area. Facilitated peer learning activities were held via phone and email to assist West Central in developing a network of peers who are successfully addressing similar issues. This peer learning session included overviews by staff of Northwest Tennessee on:
 - Partnerships with both K-12 and higher education to host "Manufacturing Days" to engage the emerging workforce and their parents;
 - Overviews of how the board has marketed and utilized the National Career Readiness Certificate as tools to engage employers by providing no-cost job profiles and customizing career readiness certification level requirements for individual jobs;
 - Working with the Port Authority to build a regional identity in collaboration with economic development initiatives; and
 - Organizational development strategies Northwest Tennessee Region uses, such as site visits to other areas of the nation to observe and learn from peers who are successfully building industry and community partnerships.

6. Framework for workgroups focusing on industry priorities: Following the launch, the Maher & Maher facilitator provided the team with a report that included the key points industry representatives discussed during the meeting and provided recommendations for how the West Central region could organize their newly-developed working groups to address the three priority areas. This framework also included suggested roles and responsibilities for each member of the workgroup and for the larger regional planning leadership team. It was noted that during the time between the statewide meeting and industry launch meeting, the responsibility for much of the regional planning matrix action steps had fallen to a few members of the regional planning team. Therefore, the framework was also grounded heavily in revisiting the original strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis and the regional planning matrix to encourage the participation and investment of the full regional planning team as they move forward.

Recommendations

1. The regional team needs a shared sense of ownership and championship among partners: The West Central Regional team accomplished a significant amount of work together in a relatively short time, particularly considering that this was the first time many partners were coming together on a truly regional basis. That said, the regional team is, to some extent, still developing, organizing, expanding, and determining how they will work together moving forward. To ensure sustainability of the effort, all partners on the regional team need to be continually engaged to develop a sense of ownership of and investment in the team's work. In some cases, one or two partner organizations have been the primary drivers of the team's work thus far, and at times there has appeared to be a reluctance among other partners to step up to lead workgroups around the priority areas identified by industry. As the team evolves, cultivating engagement and support among all partners will be essential.
2. Formalize a team structure to address goals and action steps as they relate to industry-prioritized needs: While the West Central regional team has developed a plan and they understand the benefits of regional planning, they would benefit from some dedicated time to further build an operational structure for the team. A framework of roles and responsibilities for workgroups has been provided, but it is unclear if the region has adopted this method or a similar structure and obtained buy-in from both members of the regional planning leadership team and other partners who attended the launch meeting. The planning matrix can also serve as a great resource in formalizing the team's structure, as it provides insights regarding potential opportunities for the region that would be advanced through the operationalization of sector strategies for job seekers and employers. Further progress could be achieved with the support of a facilitator and/or regional team leaders initiating the process. Another approach is to identify resources that can be dedicated to this work, including staff time and funding. Identifying an individual who can serve as a coordinator for bringing partners together

regularly, organizing the logistics of the meetings, and serving as the overall champion for employer-driven sector strategy work would greatly help maintain momentum. Seeking WIOA Transition funds to carry out some of the strategies in the plan or pursuing other grant funding opportunities that support manufacturing career pathway development and apprenticeship opportunities could be an option.

3. Sector strategies and career pathways ultimately need to be operationalized at the service delivery level: As regional partners move forward, they will need to examine their current staffing, organization, and service delivery structures and align them to the workforce needs of targeted sectors and to career pathways within those sectors. At a minimum, focusing regionally on sector strategies within diversified manufacturing will require partners to adjust how they present labor market information to job seekers, invest funding in training, and design training programs for youth and adults (including increasing focus on work-based learning). Partners will need to ensure that staff at all levels of their organizations understand the focus on sector strategies and what that focus means for their jobs. Training and capacity development will be important to enable all staff to operate successfully in a sector-driven service environment.
4. Expand existing models within the region and build to scale: There are collaborative efforts that currently involve at least two partners taking place across the region. While these efforts are currently relatively small in scale, they provide a foundation for the region that can be replicated and scaled as additional partners and geographic areas are engaged. One of these examples includes a manufacturer who serves on the local workforce board and the regional planning team. The board member's company works with local K-12 school systems to introduce manufacturing career opportunities and skill set requirements to students and parents through classroom visits and other means. Highlighting additional models like this one for other employers to replicate can assist in marketing manufacturing as a good career choice to the emerging workforce and their parents. Such examples also should be further documented in the region's asset map. The key is to take the best cross-agency initiatives to scale in the region systematically. Identifying action plans with clear leads, responsible parties, objectives, and further action steps will create accountability among all members of the team and help support sustainability. This will create additional "stockholders" in the region and provide concrete opportunities to work collaboratively across partners and systems, and will also support aligning and braiding resources to better meet business and individual customer needs.
5. Maintaining momentum and building sustainability are important considerations: The team will need to maintain the momentum begun under this initiative and find ways to support ongoing communication, coordination among partners, regional plan development, and, ultimately, plan implementation and tracking. To maintain clear communication and momentum, the team must implement a defined framework and messaging. The team should identify key small goals that can be achieved now and serve

to build momentum in this initiative. Over the long term, the regional team's priority efforts must be sustained and built to greater scale, which will require financial, policy, and operational commitments from team members. Maintenance of momentum and early successes are critical to ensuring that the team maintains credibility with employers.

D. Southwest Region Summary Report

Team Development and Planning Process

The Southwest planning team was largely already in place and working toward building an employer-led system in advance of participating in the Statewide Launch in October 2015. Active members of the team include workforce partners, school districts, community college, economic development partners (and the Joplin Partnership), chambers of commerce, and representatives of various grant-funded services, including Food Stamps and TANF. The team embraced a strategic vision of a workforce system that works across program and political boundaries to the benefit of its employer and job applicant customers. The statewide sector strategies effort generally supports and encourages priority Southwest regional initiatives such as Sector Ready, Career Pathways, credentialing, and efforts to assist applicants with barriers to employment.

The Southwest region is continuing its push to incorporate the vision inspired by both WIOA legislation and state leadership. They are down the road in sector work, focused on manufacturing, and are now working the supply-side applicant pool, hoping to engage new populations with employers. The early efforts resulted in manufacturing representatives becoming directly active in the recruitment and education of students and potential job applicants. This effort was developed in response to employers wanting better-informed and trained applicants and is an indication of workforce partners following employers' lead, rather than leading with their programs.

Target Industries

Using a variety of data and labor market intelligence, the Team identified Healthcare, Manufacturing, Professional Services, Information Technology, Construction, and Transportation as the sectors likely to yield the highest return on investment for the region. The initial activity focused on Manufacturing, as the region has a history of work in the sector. Among resources used for analysis were Economic Modeling Specialists International industry cluster data provided by Maher & Maher's data consultant Scott Sheely and Geographic Solutions sector projections, impact analysis, and job posting characteristics. The Team tried to align its priorities with those of the Joplin Regional Partnership as well as with state-level strategies. Industry size and projected growth rates were the Team's priority considerations in

selecting target sectors; team members also considered location quotient, emerging skill gaps, and likelihood of resistance to cyclical recessions in identifying targets.

Key Goals

The Southwest region has identified and is making progress on a number of interconnected goals related to its industry sector work:

1. Enhance credentials and credentialing. The Team is working to improve credentials across industries so they better reflect the requirements of industry and competence of recipients. They have found skills and credentials traditionally affiliated with jobs in one industry may be transferable to other industries. The board and partners have outreached to leaders around the country and incorporated best practices in support of developing more reliable credentials. The Team is also continuing its work with employers to increase the use of career readiness credentials. Eight of the eleven counties in the region have made significant progress toward or attained Certified Work Ready Community status – serving as an indicator to employers that education, economic development, and workforce partners are aligned and ready to meet their skill needs.
2. Identify skill gaps where training can provide a solution. The Team is engaging with employers to determine which job reductions are due to skill gaps and where resources may be redirected to move people into good jobs. Training in the region will be examined by the Team to assess training outcomes, determine if more resources are necessary to meet demand, and review the implications of student debt on training access.
3. Work with industry to more accurately reflect opportunities for careers. With employers, the Team is attempting to use education to highlight job opportunities in industries that suffer from negative and dated perceptions (manufacturing). The industry believes that young people think manufacturing jobs are dirty and not desirable. In fact, the industry has changed and can offer high-paying and stable employment. The initiative is another example of the workforce system representatives following the employer lead that should result in better outcomes for students and job applicants.

4. Analyze characteristics of certain population segments and assess barriers to employment. From the supply side, the Team plans to further study how criminal records, substance abuse, and limited English proficiency are affecting poverty and unemployment in the region. The Team plans to identify the more effective approaches to moving these population segments into employment.
5. Expand utilization of career pathways. The Team plans to continue its good work of connecting and informing the range of community providers through outreach and negotiating MOUs. The effort should cause providers to clarify the range of services available in the region, enable planners to identify gaps, and help to evaluate effectiveness.
6. Improve customer service. The board is also planning to emphasize a growing focus on customer care, beginning in the Job Centers and including employer services. While building an employer-led response, the board and partners continue to focus on applicant segments requiring some intervention or support for successful labor market outcomes. As described above, special attention is being paid to youth, ex-offenders, public assistance recipients, and the disabled population in service design and delivery.
7. Develop partner leaders. A continuing priority is identifying industry champions for future work, in manufacturing and for other sectors. The process will include employer outreach through focus groups and employer review of curricula and its delivery. The board is moving ahead with aligning with a new ACT manufacturing pilot and evaluating a new family of credentials developed by the National Association of Manufacturers.

Deliverables Created for the Region

The Team worked on several key deliverables and completed priority activities during the course of the project, which the Team's facilitator provided feedback and thoughts on, as requested. Topics/deliverables around which the facilitator coached and/or provided feedback included:

1. Surveys and focus groups with leaders in Healthcare and Manufacturing were conducted. Findings were presented at the Heartland Workforce Summit.
2. Ongoing partnership meetings by sector, both on-site and virtual.

3. Preview videos that show realistic requirements and demands for jobs and testimonials of employees will be developed.
4. Collaborate with education to develop short-term training (skill badges).
5. Complete development of Sector Ready Tools and distribute to K-12 schools.
6. As a key Team member, the WIB will consider additional measures of success, including: retention and layoff aversion, as verified by local economic development agencies; enrollment and credential attainment for targeted occupations; employer measures, such as hire time cycle, retention, and customer satisfaction; and increased earnings and advancement related to career pathways.

Recommendations

The Southwest Team is advanced in its approach to building a regional, industry sector-driven system. The Team is encouraged to continue its efforts in the following areas:

1. Develop strategic supply-side responses, including approaches for underserved populations, to connect individuals to opportunities in target industry sectors on the demand side.
2. Further develop short-term training models and credentials and increase their recognition and utilization by education and other partners, where appropriate.
3. Continue efforts to engage additional partners in the regional sector effort.
4. Examine best practice models and approaches from other regions that might be useful for adoption in the Southwest region.

E. Ozark Region Summary Report

Team Development and Planning Process

The regional team came together well and worked quite effectively from the beginning of the project. Active members represented chambers of commerce, the community college, universities, the TANF program, economic development, and youth services providers. Members were active and engaged in regular meetings to discuss the development of strategies for a sector initiative. It became obvious that members recognized they owned the process and were not waiting on WIOA regulations or guidance for work to begin. Some members stepped forward on varying issues and needs (such as building a database for the team) so the team could see progress between meetings.

Target Industries

The team studied the data provided by Maher & Maher at the statewide launch event in October 2015 and later hosted its Maher facilitator at the Job Center to analyze the data further and set a rough course for working with a target industry. The Team decided to initially pursue Healthcare. Analysis of the data identified healthcare as a significant industry based on relative size and projected growth. It also offers above average employee earnings and established standards for employment credentials and training. The team held meetings with healthcare employers to validate needs suggested by data and also completed an asset map related to the industry. The Team has since expanded beyond Healthcare to other industries identified through data analysis, including Manufacturing, Construction, and IT, and is sponsoring Industry Roundtable discussions with employers in those sectors.

Key Goals

1. Demonstrate value to employers. Through discussions and follow-up planning, the Team has emphasized a commitment to recognizing employers as a primary customer of the system. Following the statewide launch, the Board embraced a demand-driven system as a goal and followed through with training of its employer services staff, focusing on using data and employer input to guide service delivery decisions. The Team is still struggling with ensuring that the Roundtable discussions continue to deliver value to the employers, as opposed to serving as venues for public partners to make presentations. Through the Roundtables and meetings in the community, there is awareness of the Team and its efforts to better align production of the regional workforce with projected

needs of employers. Employers contacted so far support the vision; the goal moving forward is to deliver on that vision and demonstrate tangible results. Initial roundtables completed for Healthcare, Manufacturing, Construction, and IT will have follow-up meetings in the fall.

The early industry meetings are producing activity. Applying information from the Roundtables, the Board explored producing industry specific videos for high school students. The initial production proved too expensive to replicate so the Board is preparing to produce its own videos. The Board received an ETA-sponsored Brownfield grant that may offer connections with Construction employers. The Board also partnered with a non-profit organization in applying for a Tech Hire grant supporting the IT industry. If successful, funds can support moving young workers without credentials into IT jobs. The Team is monitoring IT as reports show a current year decline in local IT jobs of 6%. Time will tell if the decline represents a short-term drop or more serious decline in long-term employment. The Team also notes a similar decline of about 5% in another industry, Transportation, under consideration for targeting. The Team is paying attention to and following its best data sources.

Representatives from the Team recently presented a methodology for supporting Industry Roundtables to peers from across the state. The presentation was well received and the Team has responded to inquiries about their efforts.

2. Build support among local elected officials for the industry initiative. The Team recognizes elected officials as partners in building a local workforce system and has made a special effort to inform and gain support from local elected officials. The first presentation (to the Mayor of Springfield) was successful and was followed by another presentation to additional Mayors in the region. The result was a consensus to support the effort, although that support has not yet generated significant activity. The Team indicates they will continue to invite elected officials to participate in appropriate employer forums and to keep them informed as important partners. The Team is considering hosting a Business Leaders' Forum, successful in other places, which may be combined with elected official participation.
3. Build system capacity through training. A key goal for the Board is developing workforce system staff capacity around industry sector strategies and serving employers in that context. The Board is training its employer services staff to focus on building sustained (and personal) relationships with employers in target sectors, as part of a strategy to

build employer recognition of the system as a quality HR provider. Following the vision of the sector initiative, staff are learning to respond to customer need instead of leading with program services. Subsequent training will identify methods for better integrating service response aligned with demand based on customer need instead of supply-side program revenue. The Team has recognized that a system response to skill shortages is an integrated service response, to include program dollars and other community resources.

Deliverables Created for the Region

Maher & Maher was responsive to the Team's requests for labor market data analysis. Scott Sheely did the initial work on identifying the most significant industries in the region. He then followed with more information on occupations and staffing for those industries. The Maher facilitator had regular phone conferences scheduled with Board staff every two weeks. After several phone consultations, the Team invited the Maher facilitator to meet on-site. The Team meeting provided a good discussion among members about what a well-functioning workforce system may look like. There was discussion about considering broader success measures that align with employer need, good job seeker customer service, and program compliance. Team members agreed to participate in asset mapping and in building a continuing resource data base.

As a lead Team member, the Board invited the Maher facilitator to meet with employer services and planning staff. The discussion and training, supporting the above-referenced staff capacity effort, included discussion on marketing, building long-term relationships, providing the most current employment information (learned from employers) to education partners and students and job seekers, and discussion on the tension between program performance goals and good customer service. All of the discussion items require more work in reviewing rules, policies, and procedures that impact how and why work is done.

The training session also evolved into a discussion about integrating program services and improving service in the Job Center. Board staff and the Maher facilitator continued regular telephone conversations on the issues discussed in the Team meetings.

Recommendations

The Ozark Team's Maher & Maher facilitator offers the following recommendations in support of the Team's continued work and progress:

1. As of June 2016, the Team has not convened in several weeks and has not adopted specific plans to keep members involved and contributing. A decline in activity might be expected as compliance deadlines and summer approach. If there are no formal Team meetings in the summer months, fall probably offers a good opportunity to reconvene and connect. However, the absence of meetings does not mean the important work of the Team stops. There should be communication among available members so that any momentum (or confidence) is not lost. As discussed at the staff training, the change effort requires an ongoing commitment and action by leadership or the initiative will stall. The first fall meetings require good staff work in the interim to show progress and re-energize members, be they partners or employers.
2. Board staff should continue to show a commitment to the sector strategy. They indicate a good early response from employers and already see benefit from the employer focus. Staff should be looking to see if (1) employers list **more jobs** with the system, and (2) **more employers** list their jobs with the system. Both measures are indicators of employer satisfaction with services received.
3. Continue to pursue sponsoring a Business Leaders' Forum. A meeting with important business leaders and elected officials requires the best staff work for the best outcome. The agenda has to be crafted so that everyone participating sees the discussion is around responding to employer need. Time spent with the meeting leader in advance of the meeting is critical to achieving a quality outcome and to keeping discussion focused. Service provider participation, if allowed, should be kept to a minimum with the agenda built around employer discussion.
4. A person should assume or be assigned responsibility for the sector initiative in order to ensure its implementation and ongoing progress. Program compliance and operational responsibilities can obstruct the best of intentions, and the sector work will need to be given priority and support equal to that of programs and services governed by regulations, policy, and performance standards. Performance targets should be adopted for plans and included in contracts to insure individuals and organizations align their work with goals. Reports to the governing local boards (including the WIB) should include the adopted targets along with program compliance targets. Include the policy-making boards in discussions on setting targets so that measures of success continue to evolve based on which measures prove most valuable.

5. Find ways to use the good information gained from employers to inform the system about changes to the regional labor market. Current job information can be packaged and displayed to users in a number of ways. It can inform provider institutions of changes in demand that should impact what is offered to their customers and encourage programming changes by bringing market forces to bear on the education and training system. It can inform customers (including students and parents) about good career choices and guide them toward better choices as consumers. It should inform the WIB and other program providers and inform regular adjustments in the obligation of program resources used for education and training in response to changing labor market conditions and needs.

F. Northeast Region Summary Report

Team/Planning Development Process

The Northeast Regional Team includes public sector partners from workforce development, Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Education and Literacy, the Family Support Division, economic development, and post-secondary education. During the October 2015 Statewide Launch meeting, the Team focused its time in sessions on exploring the cluster data provided by Maher & Maher, identifying target clusters, and discussing skill shortages in key clusters. The group was familiar with the concept of clusters presented at the Statewide Launch meeting, and benefitted from the expertise and insights provided by the Team's economic development member, who has experience working with similar data sets and strongly supports regional sector approaches. The Team noted its interest in receiving additional support around data from MERIC's LMI representative for the region as well as additional support during the project from Maher & Maher and its data specialist, Scott Sheely.

Based on growth, wages, and size, the Team identified manufacturing, especially metal and metal fabrication (including welding); transportation; and healthcare as its top three target clusters (agriculture is also considered important). The Team focused its Statewide Launch conversations on exploring skill shortages that have been identified repeatedly in advanced manufacturing. Welding skill gaps were noted by many employers as a serious problem in the Northeast region. These conversations helped the Team to better understand how widespread welding skill shortages are in the region and how many different types of employers need welders now. The group reviewed what they have already done together to address welding skill shortages, as well as what they could do to build on that foundation. Team members noted that the Northeast region is very large geographically and that partners have not worked together on sector strategies at the regional level before. However, the Team committed to working together to document the skill shortages in welding as identified by employers and made plans to conduct an employer survey to obtain additional business input on manufacturing skill shortages. During the initial meeting the Team completed a SWOT analysis, which highlighted their strong partnership skills and foundational knowledge of their region's challenges in sector work.

Early in the project, the Team also completed a self-assessment exercise. As a team, their highest score was on the "Driven by high-quality, current, shared data" factor, and their lowest score was on the "Measured, improved and sustained sector strategies" factor.

Over the course of the project, the team worked together collaboratively to identify key goals and activities, including further exploring and documenting manufacturing skill shortages, conducting an employer survey, and expanding community college curriculum-sharing in the region. Moving forward, the Team will be launching its survey and conducting a manufacturing industry launch meeting once survey results have been gathered and analyzed.

Target Industries

Based on growth, wages, and size, as well as significant skill gaps and workforce needs, the Team identified manufacturing (especially metal and metal fabrication, with a focus on welding) as its initial industry for focus. Additional target industries for later focus may include transportation and healthcare. Agriculture was also noted by the team as an important industry in the region.

Key Goals

During the initial meeting of the Team at the Statewide Launch, three goals emerged for a regional manufacturing sector project, which the group agreed to pursue together:

1. The Team committed to working together to document region-wide skill shortages in welding as identified by employers, and made plans to conduct an employer survey to obtain additional business input on manufacturing skill shortages.
2. The Team committed to supporting the economic development partners in leading regional employer survey efforts. The Team's intention is to keep the employers' workforce needs' at the forefront and their economic development partners in the "driver's seat."
3. The community college partners agreed to ramp up their sharing of curriculum and staff resources among colleges to maximize each of their contributions to training solutions and to eliminate duplication of effort among the campuses in the region.

Action on the goals began as soon as the Team was back in the region. The first draft of their employer survey was developed by the economic development partners with input from the rest of the Team early in 2016 and was field-tested by regional economic development partners. The initial survey results demonstrated a need to retool the survey to add questions and reach a larger audience. As of June 2016, the Team was fine-tuning their revamped survey; the survey development and refinement this process helped to strengthen the relationship and

trust among all Team members and the partnership with regional economic development stakeholders in particular. MERIC staff were also very helpful to this process, offering survey data analysis and other data support.

Since the initial statewide meeting, the Team has met twice in person and worked together by telephone. They completed their initial action plan in early February 2016, which included additional goals for their work:

1. They agreed that employer leadership is critical and will seek a business leader who is an identified champion of advancing the skill training of his/her employees, a proponent of companies working together at the industry level and, therefore, a likely candidate for playing a lead role in a manufacturing sector project.
2. The community college partners on the Team will continue to expand their efforts to share curriculum and resources with one another across the region so that each college can benefit from others' expertise and they can each do more for their customers. The region's TAACCCT grants were identified as great resources for identifying potential curriculum ideas.
3. A region-wide manufacturing sector launch meeting will be scheduled once the survey results are available and a business leader has been recruited to lead the launch convening.

Deliverables Created for Region

1. Initial and additional data on the region's clusters, staffing pattern data, interstate labor market commuting pattern data, and occupational data
2. Employer survey samples used by other Missouri regions

In addition, these template examples were shared with the Northeast regional team over the course of the project:

1. Project plan template to guide the team's and facilitator's work during the project
2. Team meeting agendas and notes
3. Updated regional plan framework to reflect team discussions following the October 2015 statewide launch meeting
4. Asset-mapping template
5. Materials and other deliverables related to industry launch meetings, such as invitation language, a sample agenda, a sample participant handout, and other materials

Finally, the Maher & Maher facilitator conducted an in-person visit with the team on June 23, 2016, which was a key project activity. The visit took place in Paris at the Workforce Development Board office. The Team had originally planned to conduct a regional launch during the course of the project but postponed launch planning as they worked to complete their regional WIOA planning work. The purpose of the facilitator's June 2016 visit was to review materials provided to the Team throughout the project, in particular employer survey materials; review the current regional action plan; and discuss next steps for updating the action plan.

Recommendations

1. The regional partners should leverage regional WIOA planning efforts to further their Team's understanding of how it can support sector work moving forward.

The Northeast Regional Workforce Board has just completed regional and local WIOA plans, and the insights gained through that work should be used to inform and enhance planned next steps in manufacturing sector strategies work. During the WIOA planning process, the strong working relationships among the Board and its partners in economic development, post-secondary education, K-12 education, and regional business organizations provided many additional opportunities for expanding the Team's view of their region's needs.

Additional insights on the Team's ongoing sector work can be gained from the following two areas:

- Analysis of the NCRC and Work Ready Communities efforts already underway in the region with strong support from the state. These efforts have created effective forums for county-level and regional discussions on key workforce issues and are a practical foundation for comprehensive partnership development and advancement.
 - The statewide effort to focus additional educational resources on the 40% of high school students who do not obtain their high school diplomas. This initiative has made the importance of foundational skills more visible and helped to raise awareness among local elected officials and state legislators of the challenges employers face with regard to this workforce segment.
2. The Northeast region should continue making progress on plans for hosting the manufacturing industry launch meeting.

The Northeast Workforce Development Board is well-positioned to convene the regional partners for the launch meeting, working closely with the business champion the Board and its partners are working to identify, as well as other business partners. Manufacturers' input during the launch, as well as the feedback that is gathered through the employer survey, should drive launch conversations and the Team's next steps in its sector work.

3. The Northeast Team should continue to update the action plan initially developed in February 2016.

While the current action plan is comprehensive, planned activities and timelines have evolved since the plan was first drafted, and the plan should be updated to reflect the Team's ongoing work and any new data/intelligence that has been gathered. Keeping the plan updated over time – particularly after major activities like the regional launch meeting – will help keep the Team's work on-track and maintain momentum.

4. The Northeast Team should continue to work closely with other Missouri sector strategies teams in neighboring regions, especially the Northwest Missouri Team.

The Northeast Team is eager to learn from its peers and to continue its excellent working relationship with MERIC staff to understand how the Northeast region interacts with neighboring regions. The Northeast Team has worked especially closely with Northwest Missouri over the course of the project, given the similarities in their regions and their shared position as the northern one-third of the state. The region should also continue to work with other states with whom it shares labor sheds and workforce dynamics, including Iowa and Illinois.

G. Central Region Summary Report

Team/Planning Development Process

The Central Region, which was represented by the workforce development board (industry members, community college representatives, and staff), met at the October 2016 Statewide Launch Meeting to review regional data, determine key challenge areas, and develop a high-level action plan. The plan set a roadmap for how the group will target its selected sector and progress toward a fuller workforce response.

The group also identified needing to work on building a foundation upon which a true sector strategy approach can succeed. Specifically, the group recognized a few critical challenges:

- It needs to bolster its relationships with key economic development entities across the region (so that it can better align regional education and training investments with where the real future job growth will occur);
- It needs to more consistently use data (from MERIC or elsewhere) to make real-time informed decisions about key regional industries to target and key occupations around which to build programs; and
- It needs to more assertively seek and form lasting partnerships with business/industry groups so that they can be more responsive to demand.

The facilitator and the group's leadership team held bi-weekly calls for several months. These calls were largely focused on digging further into the provided labor market data and shifting target sectors (the group had originally had select Tourism and Hospitality as a target sector but, after examining the lower wages in this sector, shifted to Advanced Technologies).

Following this series of team calls with the facilitator, the local workforce area went through staffing transitions, which might have impacted the team's ability to continue to meet. The facilitator continued to reach out to the team throughout the project to offer support, resources, and to facilitate their launch meeting. It is unclear whether the same team continued to meet or plan collaboratively.

Target Industries

The region selected Advanced Industries as its initial industry focus sector, which is characterized by its deep involvement with technology R&D and STEM workers and encompasses:

- Advanced manufacturing (e.g. electrical equipment, ship making)
- Energy industries (e.g. power generation)
- High-tech services (e.g. computer system design, engineering services)

Compared nationally, the region has a high concentration of Advanced Industries jobs and the number of jobs in this sector (15k) is expected to grow over the next decade. The average wages of occupations in this sector, at \$72k+, are extremely high and the sector offers a multitude of opportunities for workers at all skill levels.

The region also identified Health Care, Logistics & Distribution, and Leisure/Hospitality as key to the growth of the region.

The regional leadership team indicated, well into the project, a desire to break out its 19-county region into three sub-regions, highlighting the specific differences between the geographies and economies. While data was provided to help the region potentially make some changes in its target sectors, it is not clear whether the fuller region decided to focus on other industries in addition to Advanced Industries. The group planned to hold an industry partnership launch on June 29th using a local facilitator to coordinate.

Key Goals

The initial goal for the region was to build a more demand-driven sector strategy approach to serving workers beginning with Advanced Industries as a test sector. The team was going to use the labor market data to convene employers in the industry to begin a conversation around key occupational and skill gaps. The regional team had also sought to build stronger alignment and buy-in for this approach through a project charter that would provide team members with a clear set of responsibilities in supporting this new approach. A charter was provided to the team as an example from which to build.

Deliverables Created for the Region

1. Action plan (a project plan summarizing how the group would move toward this aligned Advanced Industries sector)
2. Data (including the data packages that provided evidence of high growth potential target sectors from which the group could select; and updated packages to take into account the client's interest in breaking the region into three smaller sub-regions)
3. Data presentation (a draft presentation and template aimed at helping the team articulate externally its selected target industries and occupations. Product was to be used as a presentation during its sector partnership launch. It was designed to also integrate real-time LMI data that the group is already pulling.)
4. Group Charter (a list and description of roles and responsibilities that the group members should consider as the new sector partnership gets launched)
5. Asset map template (a template to facilitate the collection of regional information that would support the growth of an Advanced Technologies sector partnership)

Recommendations

The following are recommendations to launch and/or advance a sector partnership in the Advanced Industries sector in the Central Region.

1. Identify a mix of companies—and champions—within the industry to invite to join the sector partnership: With the labor market this project yielded and the real-time data already being collected by the region, the regional team should be able to identify a robust mix of large and small firms to invite to an Advanced Industries sector partnership meeting. More specifically, the team should identify a smaller group of 2-3 industry “champions” who will serve as business leads within the partnership and help recruit other industry members. These business leads might also be considered as workforce board members to ensure the board continues to align all of its resources and programs toward a key industry sector such as this.
2. Conduct a true gap analysis of supply and demand in the industry sector: While the data shows that roughly 15,000 workers will be needed in this industry over the next decade,

it is not clear yet how the regional training and education institutions are currently meeting this demand (e.g. are there enough students with the right credentials graduating regionally to fill this pipeline?). A gap analysis will provide important data to showcase at a sector partnership meeting and facilitate a discussion with area education providers about potential future curricular and program changes.

3. Strengthen relationships with area economic development organizations and regional industry associations: While hosting a sector partnership meeting with Advanced Industries firms is an important step for this region, the region still needs to build stronger and long-term partnerships with the region's economic development and business organizations (organizations like chambers of commerce) that can lend additional credibility to sector partnerships and help engage business members over time. While there are a number of economic development organizations in the region there is no indication that they are actively involved in helping push the board's vision.
4. Continue to track Advanced Industries data and integrate it into career center services: Because Advanced Industries represents such a critical industry for the region, the region should ensure that it continues to monitor the industry's growth patterns and workforce needs. The Central Region workforce area can play that role. More importantly, the region should begin to incorporate Advanced Industries-related resources and information into its career center services (e.g. career mapping, career pathway information, industry job descriptions) so it can steer more job seekers into this promising sector.

H. South Central Region Summary Report

Team/Planning Development Process

Partners in the South Central region have a long-standing history of working together, and note that community leaders are engaged and communicate well with one another. While regional leaders have worked together on a variety of efforts in the past, most activity tends to take place on the east and west sides of the region, rather than throughout the region as a whole. Team members represent a range of partner systems, including workforce development (Board and Job Center staff and Board members), adult education, post-secondary education, the Missouri Work Assistance program for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families recipients, vocational rehabilitation, a regional small business incubator, and a council of governments.

Several members of the South Central team participated in the October 2015 statewide launch meeting and used their time together there to identify potential focus industries and begin identifying priority strategies and next steps based upon their self-assessment and SWOT analysis activities. The team's facilitator gave a follow-up sector strategies and project orientation presentation to the team in January 2016. During a team meeting in March 2016, the team selected an initial focus industry, Diversified Manufacturing, and identified some initial priorities for work with the industry.

Later in the spring of 2016, the South Central regional team increased its engagement with an existing advanced manufacturing industry group in the region. The group, which includes manufacturers, career and technical education, MSU-West Plains and other colleges, the Workforce Board, the Ozark Small Business Incubator, and others, meets regularly. Current areas of focus include identifying available and needed manufacturing training programs, curriculum, credentials, and career pathways. This fall will see the launch of the Greater Ozarks Center for Advanced Technology (GOCAT), an advanced manufacturing training center. There is also a good deal of small business outreach taking place, as well as efforts to connect manufacturers along supply chains.

Target Industries

The team decided to focus initially on the diversified manufacturing cluster. There are multiple forms of manufacturing throughout the region and a significant amount of existing interest and activity in the industry in the region.

Team members used the data provided by Scott Sheely in discussing and deciding upon the initial focus industry and also brought other data and tacit knowledge to the conversation. A COG survey of manufacturers in seven counties, as well as the Board's 12-county labor shed study, are also important inputs to the region's manufacturing sector strategy.

Moving forward, the team is interested in potentially pursuing work with the healthcare services and wood products industries. There are strong healthcare-related programs and pathways in the region, including a range of nursing and allied health training. Wood products is extremely highly-concentrated in the region but has not been a target for investment in the past. The team is interested in seeing how it might help support the growth of the industry through strategic support.

Key Goals

The South Central team developed preliminary goals in several areas of the regional sector strategies planning framework, and later discussed additional regional priorities, which are captured here. These are the team's initial goals, which were developed during the October 2015 statewide launch meeting and the March 2016 team meeting:

1. Gather, Analyze, and Validate Workforce Data/Intelligence
 - Fully explore available data on the Diversified Manufacturing sector and identify priority industry drivers, then validate data-related observations with manufacturers
 - Consider assembling a regional data team
2. Form Sector Partnerships: Convene, Partner, and Articulate Vision
 - Build a comprehensive and inclusive regional partnership, and identify and engage additional needed partners in the work of the team (may include economic development, small business/entrepreneurship representatives, elected officials, etc.)
 - Create and adopt a shared regional vision
 - Enhance communication efforts both internally, among partners, and externally, in terms of strategic regional communications and messaging

3. Assess Employer-Defined Talent Needs

- Engage industry employers to solicit input on their workforce needs and desired solutions (sustained effort over time)
- Work with employers and other partners to identify common skill needs across industry clusters and support skills transferability efforts
- Working with employers, map career pathways in the manufacturing industry (this work has been started but needs to be furthered)

4. Develop Strategies and Align Resources

- Create a draft, initial strategic plan framework for the Diversified Manufacturing clusters, and then engage regional manufacturers to validate and refine the plan
- As a strategic focus, target higher-paying, family-sustaining jobs, rather than marketing cheap labor as a way to attract companies to the region
- Align education and training programs, courses, and delivery methods to identified career pathways and skill and credential needs along pathways

Since the South Central team became more involved with the existing advanced manufacturing initiative, its specific goals will likely be shaped by the broader objectives of that effort. As noted above, current priorities include assessing current and needed manufacturing training credentials to build career pathways and building relationships among regional manufacturers along supply chains.

The South Central team also plans to map the work it is currently doing around advanced manufacturing to replicate sector strategies with additional industries. The team has also prioritized the integration and expansion of Registered Apprenticeship for target industries.

Deliverables Created for the Region

The following products, in addition to regional data, were created for the South Central regional team over the course of the project:

- a) Project plan to outline work during the project;
- b) Initial regional plan framework to reflect team discussions during the October 2015 statewide launch meeting;

- c) PowerPoint presentation for the team on industry sector strategies and the focus and goals of this project;
- d) Team meeting agendas and notes;
- e) Sample industry launch meeting agenda;
- f) Asset-mapping template; and
- g) Registered Apprenticeship resources.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered in support of the South Central region's work with the advanced/diversified manufacturing sector and future work with additional target industries:

- a) Assess existing policies and service delivery strategies to determine the extent to which they support workforce development partners in meeting the needs of regional manufacturers: Ensure that partners' plans, policies, and service delivery models prioritize meeting the workforce needs of target industries, and reflect a focus on manufacturing and other targeted industry sectors. Make changes to policies or practices that may inhibit partners' ability to meet the workforce needs of the manufacturing community.
- b) Expand investments in employer-driven training models: The regional team has already prioritized the expansion of formal Registered Apprenticeship programs for manufacturing. Working with manufacturers, identify other business-driven and work-based training of interest to them. Ensure that partners' education and training investments are aligned to the content and modality preferences of employers in target sectors.
- c) Ensure that service planning and delivery for job seekers and employers reflects a focus on meeting the needs of target industry sectors: It is important that services be organized, staffed, and delivered to align with the identified workforce needs of target industries. For example, career counselors should be trained on the workforce needs of key industries, comfortable using a range of LMI in coaching job seekers, and equipped to direct job seekers to careers in regional target industries. Staff serving businesses should be expert in the workforce needs of the target sectors they serve, aligned on a unified regional team with other partners serving employers in the sector, and focused on providing workforce solutions beyond labor exchange.

- d) Prioritize the building of talent pipelines for manufacturing (and other key sectors): Manufacturers often articulate needs around getting more young people interested in manufacturing careers and replacing retiring segments of their workforces. Regional partners can ensure that in- and out-of-school youth, career-changers, veterans, and other talent pools are made aware of career opportunities in manufacturing and exposed to manufacturing through career coaching, interest and skill assessments, and work-based job exposure and training activities.

I. St. Louis Region Summary Report

Team/Planning Development Process

The St. Louis Region includes the five county St. Louis metro area (Franklin, Jefferson, St. Louis County, St. Charles, and St. Louis City). In Missouri, this is the only region, as designated by the state, that includes multiple workforce areas (4) and multiple directors (4). This particular region has just begun to engage in true regional planning as a step to more coordinated workforce services. The group had begun planning for WIOA together but had not yet integrated efforts around an agreed upon set of target industries and aligned investments. It should be noted that St. Louis City and County have been collaborating for a number of years with several southwestern Illinois counties as part of a cross-state region.

This group of workforce leaders (and leadership from St. Louis Community College) continued to meet, as needed, for the purposes of this project. The project facilitator also had individual calls with each of the workforce directors on multiple occasions. The collaborative calls were to review plan progress, review project deliverables (e.g. asset map collection), and discuss strategic options for how the group can integrate efforts with the St. Louis Partnerships' ongoing manufacturing work.

As of June 2016, the group is in discussion with the area's largest economic development organization (St. Louis Partnership) to serve in an official capacity as its workforce committee.

Target Industries

The region selected Diversified Manufacturing as its initial industry focus sector. Diversified Manufacturing includes both durable goods manufacturing and a number of non-durable goods industries:

- Vehicle manufacturing
- Metal and metal fabricating
- Chemical manufacturing
- Biotechnology

Compared nationally, the region has a high concentration of Diversified Manufacturing jobs (70K+) and the number of jobs in this sector is expected to grow over the next decade. The

average wages of occupations in this sector, at \$93k+, are extremely high and the sector offers a multitude of opportunities for workers at all skill levels.

In addition, Diversified Manufacturing was selected because each local workforce area in the region already has some existing manufacturing-related assets (e.g. high quality post-secondary training, organized manufacturing councils) that could be leveraged in a larger regional effort.

The region also identified Health Care and Financial Services, Logistics & Distribution, Bio-Sciences, and Construction as key to the growth of the region. Certain local areas within the larger region, in fact, have progressed in several of these areas.

Key Goals

The initial goal for the region within this project was to launch a sustainable manufacturing industry sector partnership in the region that could build from the St. Louis Partnership's existing Regional Advanced Manufacturing Partnership (RAMP) initiative. The region understood that a sector partnership or collaborative like this could serve as a vehicle through which manufacturing firms in the region could communicate HR challenges and workforce system providers could strategically respond. It would allow workforce leaders to interact directly with industry to determine key trends, discuss skill needs, and develop solutions at a regional scale. This type of organized and regional sustained partnership does not currently exist.

The regional group, in early discussions, identified possible members as a group of employer champions from across the diversified manufacturing sector within the region who are willing to come together specifically to discuss workforce needs over time. The thinking was that this may be a subgroup of RAMP members plus other manufacturers in other parts of the region that are not part of RAMP. Key service providers in the partnership would be represented by leaders of the four workforce areas, St. Louis Community College, and others as identified by the regional group.

The group also began to discuss the objectives of a group like this agreeing that it could address issues such as:

- Layoff aversion/rapid response (which RAMP is currently focused on)
- Creating interest in the field at an early age by influencing families and K-12 schools
- Enhancing focus on technician training at high school and post-secondary institutions

- Entrepreneurship education/support in the manufacturing space
- Building regional career pathways that lead to improved/new credentials
- Enhancing apprenticeships
- Supporting businesses with their own internal advancement strategies
- Curriculum that better aligns to immediate workforce needs

While each individual workforce area focuses on these areas, the group recognized a need to create a more collaborative regional effort.

The group originally planned to convene a meeting of manufacturing firms, with St. Louis Partnerships/RAMP, in July 2016 to announce and launch this sector partnership. However, it appears that the meeting may be delayed until a later time in the summer. In addition, some of the group's objectives might shift. Most notably, one group leader indicated that the partnership might actually become a standing workforce committee of the St. Louis Partnership and prepared to tackle talent issues beyond just manufacturing.

Deliverables Created for the Region

1. Action plan (a project plan summarizing how the group would move toward this aligned Diversified Manufacturing industry sector)
2. A regional vision around advanced manufacturing (a draft vision for the regional group in aligning efforts around this sector)
3. Data (included the data packages that provided evidence of high growth potential target sectors from which the group could select. But also included data, such as commuting patterns, which made the case for enhanced regionalism; done in response to several group members that expressed skepticism of regional interdependencies).
4. Asset Map Brief (a presentation that identified key underlying economic factors that define St. Charles, Jefferson, Franklin, St. Louis Counties and St. Louis City as a potentially viable economic "region;" that provided data to support Diversified Manufacturing as a key sector; that identified key occupations within this target sector upon which the region may wish to focus future workforce development resources; and that laid out several key strategies that the group should consider in moving forward)

5. Group Charter (a list and description of roles and responsibilities that the group members should consider as the new sector partnership gets launched)
6. Meeting invitation material (a save-the-date and one-pager describing the new regional collaborative as part of a meeting that was to take place in July 2016).

Recommendations

The region now appears to be working with the St. Louis Partnership to become an official workforce committee, which is a significant step from where the group started in October. A committee such as this would have great value for industry in the region in that there becomes “one” conversation in the region about workforce needs potentially across key industry sectors. The following recommendations support the success of such as committee:

1. Promote the workforce committee: The regional group should consider making a formal public announcement about the committee “launch” and its short and longer-term objectives. Promoting the committee will provide the necessary awareness needed to engage business and the appropriate service providers. As part of this effort, the group should consider the development of a committee name and marketing material that would highlight its efforts.
2. Develop a committee charter and plan: A committee/partnership like this will need a strong and organized convening entity, very active local workforce area leadership, and a structured plan for how it will carry out its objectives. The group should consider a charter and plan that would: 1) set criteria for membership (which business members are to participate? Service providers?); 2) identify specific roles and responsibilities of each local workforce area as lead for the committee (e.g. does one local workforce area take a lead during committee meetings around a particular industry sector that is more prominent to that sub-region?); and 3) sets a committee vision, set of objectives, and one-year course of action.
3. Maintain a focus on Diversified Manufacturing: Even if the committee is formed to address workforce issues across key regional industry sectors, the group should consider focusing initially on Diversified Manufacturing, as detailed under this project. Building cohesiveness around a particular industry can focus the group and yield specific, and often understandable (to the public) solutions that will provide the committee with

important momentum to tackle other sectors. The data certainly indicates that there is much work to be done to address talent needs in this particular sector.

4. Develop a more coordinated regional business services team: While the committee would likely bring out important *strategic* workforce challenges and innovation solutions for addressing skill gaps, there is still significant work to be done in the region at a more operational or service-delivery level to ensure the solutions are aligned and sustainable. For example, the region might consider more closely coordinating its existing business outreach/services efforts across partners and across the entire geographic region. This would mean bringing together some or all of the key regional partners that currently reach to businesses (area community college workforce programs, local workforce areas/career centers, area economic development organizations through their business retention visits, etc.) to more regularly share broader industry intel and, where appropriate, coordinate efforts. This type of regional business services team can often lead to other important operational changes:
 - Workforce business service representatives, across local workforce areas, that specialize in a particular industry so that they can better engage and solve industry needs.
 - Integration of other workforce core programs (i.e. aligning business outreach so that programs such as TANF, Adult Ed, and Vocational Rehabilitation are in alignment with the large workforce system, and the work of the committee).
 - Customer-sharing data tools/software that help organizations better track and share business intel across the region.

J. Southeast Region Summary Report

Team/Planning Development Process

Southeast regional team partners have a strong history of partnership and collaboration. As such, while team members noted that they had not previously undertaken large-scale sector work region-wide, the team had a very good foundation for coming together around sector strategies and regional workforce planning efforts. Team members represent a range of partner systems, including workforce development, economic development, K-12 and post-secondary education, vocational rehabilitation, adult education, and others. The team came to this process well-formed and with a strong degree of cohesion, though it will certainly want to continue to engage additional partners from throughout the region as activities move forward.

The Southeast team was fully engaged at the October 2015 statewide launch meeting, and used their time together there to craft a shared regional vision, identify an initial focus industry, and begin identifying priority strategies and next steps. Following the October launch meeting, the team met regularly, roughly once a month, to build out its regional action plan. Early on, the team determined that hosting two diversified manufacturing industry launch meetings in the spring of 2016 was a key priority and most of the team's meetings were dedicated to planning for the launches, which were held April 26 and 27. The April meetings had two primary objectives: (1) hear directly from manufacturers about their workforce needs and challenges; and (2) develop strategies and action steps that respond to manufacturers' workforce priorities. Prior to the April meetings, the regional team also developed and conducted a workforce survey of manufacturers in the region; survey responses were shared and discussed during the manufacturing meetings.

The Southeast team made a great deal of progress over the course of the project. As a result of the April launch meetings, the team has built additional private sector interest and engagement and has defined clear priorities for action moving forward.

Target Industries

The Southeast regional team decided to focus initially on the Diversified Manufacturing cluster, which was customized to include Vehicle Manufacturing, Metals and Metal Fabricating, and Mining. Subsequent focus industries may include Agriculture Production/Agriculture Business (including Food Processing and Lumber and Wood Products); Health Sciences/Services; Energy/Power; and Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics and Wholesale Trade.

At the time the team came together in October 2015, the local workforce development board had already identified target industries, which were validated, with some nuances, by the data Scott Sheely of the Maher & Maher team provided. Among these industries, regional partners agreed that manufacturing should be the team's initial focus, given its importance and diversity in the region, varying levels of concentration and growth, and documented need for workforce support. An additional factor in prioritizing manufacturing was that many regional entities have existing partnerships with manufacturers (e.g. community college consortia), and the team felt it was important to link to and leverage those existing relationships.

Key Goals

The Southeast team's prioritized goals align well to the most critical manufacturing workforce needs and challenges identified throughout this project and discussed and validated at the regional launch meetings. The goals the team prioritized are based primarily on manufacturer survey results and manufacturers' input during the April 2016 regional industry launch meetings. They include:

1. Close major "soft"/essential and life skills gaps that exist among workers in the region;
2. Engage the K-12 education system to create earlier career exploration experiences and build the talent pipeline for manufacturers;
3. Address misperceptions about the 21st century manufacturing industry and build awareness of manufacturing career opportunities and pathways; and
4. Map and address workforce and skill gaps in the unskilled and skilled production career pathway.

Deliverables Created for the Region

A number of products, in addition to regional data, were created for the Southeast regional team over the course of the project:

1. Project plan to guide the team's and facilitator's work during the project;
2. Team meeting agendas and notes;

3. Updated regional plan framework to reflect team discussions following the October 2015 statewide launch meeting;
4. Dropbox folder to organize and house regional data and other materials;
5. A one-page summary of the region's manufacturing sector effort;
6. Asset-mapping template; and
7. Materials and other deliverables related to the April 2016 manufacturing launch meetings:
 - Invitation;
 - Agendas;
 - PowerPoint slides;
 - Briefing emails and conference call for employer dialogue panelists;
 - Participant handout and notes template;
 - Process guide for breakout group facilitators; and
 - Detailed report on the launch meetings, including breakout group notes and recommendations for the team moving forward.

Recommendations

The report on the April 2016 manufacturing meetings includes detailed recommendations for the Southeast regional team's work and progress moving forward. Recommendations tie closely to regional partners' prioritized goals for their work with the manufacturing industry. Summarized recommendations include:

1. Maintain, grow, and deliver results for the regional manufacturing partnership: Keep existing manufacturer partners engaged, and identify and engage additional ones. The "face" of the industry engagement effort – the lead intermediary and convener – should be the organization that already has the most credibility and the strongest track record with the industry, though all partners have critical roles to play (and those roles may evolve over time as additional trust is gained and results are delivered). As much as possible, bring regional manufacturers together for this effort in the context of an existing one, e.g. the community college training consortia, rather than adding additional meetings and partnership structures. It is critical to keep manufacturers – not service providers/public partners – front-and-center as the key drivers of the work of the partnership moving forward. Focus now on "early win" opportunities to respond to needs identified at the Forums and deliver immediate value, then celebrate success to build a track record of impact that can help grow the work and value of the partnership.

2. Engage other partners that need to be at the table: There are additional “public” partners that need to be engaged in this effort more strongly, particularly the K-12 education system, secondary career and technical education partners within that system, potential allies like additional Chamber of Commerce and elected officials, and non-profit/community-based organizations. Reach out to these partners to engage them in this effort and build their buy-in and investment. That said, it’s important to stress the importance of moving ahead with a “coalition of the willing.” Bring all those on board that you can, now, and keep moving ahead. Your success will eventually serve to bring on additional partners that may not be ready or willing to engage now.
3. Close major “soft”/essential and life skills gaps: The most pervasive and detrimental workforce skill gaps discussed by Forum manufacturer participants were critical workplace, “soft,” and life skills. Addressing these skill gaps successfully will require a holistic and intense region-wide effort. Stand-alone, classroom-based “soft” skills training may not be effective in addressing the need. Regional partners are encouraged to think about ways that essential skills development can be embedded and integrated “co-requisitely” with technical skills training, experiential learning like internships and apprenticeships, and classroom-based training at the secondary and post-secondary levels. Development of these skills, as manufacturers made clear, must start earlier – before high school. Achieving this goal will likely require new partnerships with the K-12 education system, pre-apprenticeship programs, and others, as discussed in the recommendations that follow.
4. Engage the K-12 education system to create earlier career exploration experiences, share manufacturers’ needs, and build the talent pipeline for manufacturers: Throughout the Forums, engaging all levels of the K-12 system, from teachers and guidance counselors to school boards and superintendents, emerged as a major need and opportunity area. Manufacturers almost uniformly expressed that career exploration and experiential activities need to start far earlier than students’ junior or senior years of high school. Partner with willing superintendents, school boards, and other K-12 education stakeholders to implement career exposure and experience activities for students starting in elementary or middle school; educate counselors and teachers about manufacturing career opportunities; and bring teachers and counselors on-site to manufacturing facilities for activities ranging from tours to summer externships.

5. Address misperceptions about the 21st century manufacturing industry and build awareness of manufacturing career opportunities and pathways: Misperceptions about the manufacturing industry – and possible unwillingness on the part of parents, counselors and teachers to route individuals to careers in the industry – are having a significant negative impact upon Southeast Missouri manufacturers. Forum participants identified a number of possibilities for addressing this challenge, including a priority for organizing a regional Manufacturing Day event on October 7, 2016 (<http://www.mfgday.com/>). Other possible outreach and education activities may include manufacturers opening their facilities for student tours and increasing outreach (educational events, job fairs) to middle and high schools; pursuing promotional campaigns such as multi-media advertisements and a series of expos on robotics and other areas of potential interest; dedicated events for teachers and counselors; and parent-centered activities. It would be helpful to engage other potential allies like elected officials, additional Chambers of Commerce, and regional industry groups in this effort to extend reach and messaging.
6. Map and address gaps in the unskilled and skilled manufacturing career pathway: Manufacturer survey results and Forum discussions with manufacturers reinforced that current and projected workforce gaps are primarily among the unskilled and skilled production occupations, as well as occupations that support those occupational areas. Regional partners should use available data to map production pathways, including required education, credentials, on-the-job experience, and other factors, and validate and amend those initial pathways with employer partners. Regional educational and training assets should then be mapped relative to the employer-validated pathways to determine gaps, duplication, and mismatch, and resolved accordingly. As regional partners undertake this effort, it will be important to consider talent pipeline “feeder” approaches, such as secondary education-based career exploration and experiences, “soft” skills training integration, foundational skills integration and development (reading, applied math, STEM, etc.), and enhanced work-based learning opportunities such as pre-apprenticeship and internship.
7. Consider developing a multi-partner, region-wide business services team to streamline access and support across the business enterprise for manufacturers and companies in other key industries: Participating Forum employers identified a range of needs, from better applicant screening and job matching; to more aligned training for new entrants and incumbents; to broader business support such as assistance with reducing turnover, increasing workforce retention, and preparing for impending retirements. Regional

partners should consider the opportunity to align around meeting all of these needs by forming a multi-partner business services team with designated team members that can serve as accessible and knowledgeable brokers of service for the range of needs regional manufacturers have. At a minimum, a regional business services team should include representatives from the economic development system, the workforce system, the community college system, the K-12 education system. The team could be organized such that whichever partner currently has the best relationship continues to serve as lead contact and broker, engaging and organizing the services and supports from other regional partners in a way that is seamless for manufacturers. This brokering approach keeps the details of navigating government-supported programs and resources in the “back office,” and delivers enhanced value and accessibility for area manufacturers. As the team moves forward, it could be organized on an industry-focused basis, with the best-qualified staff (regardless of agency affiliation) serving as the lead “point” for one or more industries.

8. Catalogue, replicate, scale, communicate, and celebrate “what works”: Southeast Missouri regional partners are doing great work together, with many opportunities for further impact ahead. Expanding reach and scale will be important as the partners move forward. As an example, Alan Wire’s efforts with the K-12 system in the southern part of the region appear to be yielding early fruit; how could similar partnerships be supported and expanded region-wide? As regional partners work together to implement manufacturer-identified solutions, it will be important to gauge impact and adjust as necessary, take demonstrated models to scale, and build partner co-investment in shared strategies. Communicating success, value, and impact will be crucial to engaging additional private sector support, as well as that of other public sector partners.

IV. Project Observations and Opportunities

The project accomplished several important objectives:

- A. While in all of the regions, partners were generally familiar with one another and had worked together in the past to varying degrees, this project deepened regional partners' relationships; enhanced understanding of available resources and initiatives across regions; and focused regional partners on taking "pockets" of innovation, often happening at a more local level, to truly regional scale. This is a significant achievement in terms of ultimately aligning partners, programs, strategies, and service delivery across organizational and funding stream silos, and in more effectively mapping, leveraging, and braiding resources to support industry-defined workforce solutions at scale.
- B. Access to and the analysis of economic and labor force data to make decisions on regional target industry clusters is a foundational part of developing sector strategies. Every region went through the process of reviewing and analyzing their region's data to come to consensus on target industry clusters. This is valuable exposure and experience as this activity must be done periodically to determine how the economic and labor force landscape of a region is changing and how that impacts the needs of employers and the investment and programming decisions of partners.
- C. Several of the regions have transitioned from engaging with individual employers in a transactional nature, primarily focused on labor exchange, to engaging with multiple employers in regional target clusters at scale, developing more strategic and sustained employer relationships, and being employer-led. Others enhanced or expanded their existing sector strategy work. For the regions that did not host an industry meeting, tools and resources, along with peers who have now participated in at least one industry meeting, are available to help them when they are ready. The needle has been moved and industry conversations are happening!

Over the course of the project, the Maher project team also identified a number of challenges and opportunities that inform our recommendations in the final section of this report. Namely:

- A. Uneven involvement of regional partners in sectors work

Local workforce area directors were the drivers of the project work and involvement of other regional partners varied, though generally was not as robust as that of the

workforce system representatives. In some cases, economic development stakeholders were operating in parallel and expressed concerns about regional workforce planning and sector efforts infringing upon their work and areas of expertise. Broadly speaking, the K-12 education system was not well-represented in this effort, which negatively impacts upon the ability to map comprehensive and well-articulated career pathways. Sector strategies, when implemented to their fullest potential, require an alignment and partnership among workforce development, all levels of education, and economic development. Our recommendations include discussion of how state partners can play a leadership role in communicating the advantages of coming to consensus around regional industry sectors and aligning regional resources to more effectively co-support priority strategies.

B. The need for project flexibility and customization based on regional needs

Any statewide initiative understandably includes common elements to ensure the objectives of the initiative are met and met at some level of scale. In the case of this project, this standardization was a challenge because of the diverse needs represented in regions across the state. Several of the regions were less engaged than was desired, quite possibly because they felt that what the project offered in terms of activities and support was not aligned to their own regional needs and priorities. Including regional partners in the design of the scope and RFP would have helped to ensure that the project was more relevant to their needs and included elements of flexibility and customization from the outset. In addition, allowing individual regions to determine their own project priorities (obviously within the framework of broader project goals) in the future may help improve the buy-in and active participation of all regional partners.

C. Treating sector strategies as “another project” rather than a culture and systems change priority

Industry sector strategies need to be understood as transformational change efforts and a new way of doing business, rather than an additional program or project, in order to be successful and effective. While some regional teams enthusiastically undertook this work, those that were significantly less engaged may have viewed this effort as “one more thing” on their already-full plates. Regular program oversight and operations, compliance and performance requirements, and concurrent pressure to develop WIOA regional plans may have taken priority in these less-engaged regions. But sector

strategies can and should be integrated into all of these areas (and more), which will need to be a focus moving forward in order to build upon this project's initial gains.

D. Limited project emphasis on and coordination of sector strategies among state partner agencies

This project focused almost exclusively on helping the 10 regions of the state more fully understand and begin to develop sector strategies. However, a critical element of their success is having a state system that provides leadership, policy guidance, technical assistance, and resources that support establishing, enhancing, and sustaining sector partnerships. State agencies need to model the same partnerships, joint planning, and co-investment that they are asking the regional teams to pursue. Providing this support and technical assistance at the state level would provide significant benefits to advancing regional teams' progress and success.

E. Maintaining momentum and ensuring sustainability

A few of the regions were already pursuing sector strategies and building strong industry partnerships prior to this effort. For those that were not, maintaining momentum and continuing to make progress may be a challenge, absent the framework of the project and the support of a facilitator, and given the competing pressures of other demands. Particularly in those regions that engaged employers to learn more about their workforce needs and desired assistance, a lack of follow-up and sustained engagement could pose a huge threat to regional partners' credibility.

V. Recommendations

The following are recommendations to the state partners for moving sector partnerships and career pathways forward over time. These recommendations are focused on the role that the state can play to support regional partners in the continued development of sector strategies and the full adoption of industry-driven sector strategies as the framework for doing business and serving both employer and job seeker customers.

- A. The state can play an influential role in **promoting the work being done around sector strategies**. Specific activities might include:
 1. Seek out and promote successful sector partnerships. Develop press releases, highlight innovative models at conferences, consider recognizing high-performing sector initiatives with financial or other incentives, and generally spread the word about successful outcomes of regional sector strategies efforts.
 2. Consider the development of a free-standing “workforce solutions” website that is designed to inform and channel information to employer customers. One example is the [Kentucky Skills Network website](#), which presents a unified brand and a single access point for all business services provided by workforce development, post-secondary education, and economic development partners, and streamlines the maze of public organizations, programs, and services for employers. This would not replace the toolkit resources currently available on the jobs.mo.gov webpage, as these are tools for workforce professionals.
- B. Continue to provide **technical assistance for regional planning teams** around sector strategy and career pathway development. Specific activities might include:
 1. Craft and promote a shared state vision that articulates state-level partners’ joint commitment to supporting industry sector work and encouraging/empowering the collaborative work of regional partners. Include messaging around why all partners should be involved – state and local – and further connect key partners including Wagner-Peyser, K-12 education, and economic development. Encourage and set the expectation for all partner systems to take active roles in furthering sector strategies work.

2. Promote and support peer-to-peer learning within regions. Several regions have strong sector partnerships and are utilizing innovative approaches to enhance their sector work. There is much that regional leaders can learn from each other.
 3. Support continued regionalism work in Kansas City and St. Louis in particular. These two regions are the only regions in the state which are made up of more than one local workforce area. They naturally have greater challenges around aligning and integrating.
 4. Provide training for Job Center management and front-line staff on industry sector strategies and career pathways and how adoption of the approach changes Center organization and staffing and service delivery for both job seeker and employer customers.
- C. Provide **funding for sector partnerships and embed requirements** for them in state policy, grant and other funding opportunities, strategic initiatives, and other avenues. Existing efforts across the state require financial support for sustainability, and requiring the sector strategies focus in various ways will also encourage adoption of this framework. Some examples might include:
1. Issuing joint policy among all key partner systems, or, at a minimum, ensuring that all key partners are collaborating on complementary policy development;
 2. Prioritizing industry sector and career pathways strategies in funding opportunities for regions;
 3. Tying performance awards or other kinds of recognition to implementation of sector and pathways strategies;
 4. Incorporating the focus on sectors and pathways into Job Center certification standards and measures;
 5. Developing indicators for high-impact workforce development boards that require a strategic focus on industry sector and career pathways work;
 6. Where appropriate, building a focus on industry sector strategies and career pathways into program assessment/monitoring and evaluation criteria and activities; and
 7. Providing operational/service delivery guidance that outlines how sectors and pathways should be incorporated and reflected.

D. Develop frameworks for and provide support to regions around related strategies and approaches that will enable them to operationalize industry sector strategies. In many regions, the sector work that has been done to date – while incredibly important – is at the conceptual and strategic levels. Getting from concepts to implementation may be a challenge for some regions. To help address this challenge, state partners should consider joint state/regional efforts to define a shared vision and guiding framework for a number of areas that will support operationalization of sector strategies:

1. **Career pathways:** Regional partners are interested in how career pathways connect to and support their industry sector strategies, and how pathways can be mapped, integrated, and implemented among partners in service delivery. In addition, there is a need for better connecting career clusters and pathways work being done by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to the pathways work underway or in development by post-secondary and workforce partners.
2. **Unified, regional business services:** In most regions, multiple partners provide business services, and there may be significant duplication in employer outreach and service delivery, particularly in regions comprised of multiple workforce areas and in regions that are very large geographically. Partners from economic development, workforce development, education, and other systems can reduce duplication, enhance alignment and resource utilization, and improve employer customers' experience by developing regional business services teams. Teams should be staffed to reflect expertise in and dedicated support for the region's critical industry sectors. Further developing a framework and guidance for best practices in the regional coordination and delivery of business services for key sectors would be very useful.
3. **Job seeker customer flow and integrated service delivery in a sector-driven environment:** Often, as regional partners work to implement industry sector strategies, they focus on necessary changes to employer customer engagement, relationship development, and service delivery. These are all critical areas, but partners also need to consider how adopting a sectors framework should change the way they approach customer flow and service delivery for job seekers, workers, and students. Partners and services may need to be organized and integrated in new, more functional ways that are intuitive for customers rather than program or funding stream-based. Service delivery staff will need to develop new expertise around the workforce needs of target sectors, and around communicating those needs to customers. Developing a framework that

articulates how the adoption of a sector strategies model can positively change the organization and delivery of services for job seekers and others would be valuable teams across the state.

- E. **Measure the success of sector partnerships** and incorporate measures, as appropriate, into program and grant monitoring and reporting activities. Promote successes! Potential measures might be:

1. Repeat business customers;
2. Time to fill vacancies;
3. Market/industry penetration;
4. Cost per hire; and
5. Turnover costs/rates.

More qualitative measures, such as employer satisfaction with the value of services provided and with the skill levels of applicants and training recipients, might also be considered.

- F. Support and coordinate **ongoing data analysis and the development of regional data analysis capacity**. MERIC is a valuable data partner and has the resources, tools, and expertise to provide regular data that would allow regions to monitor their economic and labor force data regularly. MERIC staff assigned to the regions may also be able to provide technical assistance to regional partners to improve their own capacity with data. Regions may also benefit from more frequent and customized (regional) industry updates based upon real-time LMI (job postings data), as well as access to the real-time data tools that MERIC staff use.
- G. To ensure that the progress made through this project is sustained and to meet current and future needs of the regions as they grow and enhance their work in sector strategies, consider **hiring a new state staff member** (or assign an existing one) who can be dedicated to supporting sector strategy work for the state and its regions. This staff member could provide subject matter expertise around the implementation of sector strategies and related career pathways work; solicit and aggregate regions' technical assistance needs; and coordinate the provision of technical assistance and peer-to-peer learning efforts.